



Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart

Independent School Identifies Skill-Specific Resource Needs and Guides Instruction with a Computer Adaptive Assessment

Duchesne Academy is an independent all girl school located in Houston, Texas. Duchesne's Lower School emphasizes total development across the cognitive, social, physical, and spiritual domains. The school also places a strong emphasis on academics and uses research-based and age-appropriate tools to ensure that every student receives the support she needs to succeed. The Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) has helped Duchesne's prekindergarten through grade 2 teachers plan instruction for the whole classroom and individual students in line with RTI.

Challenge

Duchesne uses a guided reading program that includes a standard reading assessment for placement. However, that assessment begins only in late kindergarten. The school began looking for a new tool to supplement its existing program and provide information about progress in prekindergarten and early kindergarten. The Head of Lower School and the teachers were interested in finding an assessment that could offer a more comprehensive view of performance and progress in both early literacy and mathematics.

Solution

Duchesne implemented the CPAA in 2009 and teachers have used it since then to assess early literacy and mathematics skills in prekindergarten through second grade three times a year (in the fall, winter and spring). The results are reviewed regularly by Head of Lower School Debra Johnson, as well as the reading specialist and teachers. Johnson uses the CPAA to get a general sense of how things are going in the early grades and identify

CPAA data confirms that our teachers are doing wonderful work. I've found the reports to be very valuable in identifying additional resources that can assist our teachers in presenting specific concepts to students. This tool has been a great addition to our curriculum.

Debra Johnson
Head of Lower School

whether any additional support is needed at the group level or for individual students.

Duchesne relies on an RTI model to ensure that no student's needs fall through the cracks. The school's reading specialist draws on a variety of assessment data to help in planning tiered instruction in line with RTI. The school combines CPAA reports with DIBELS, other assessments and classroom observations to identify red flags and help differentiate instruction for students with diagnosed learning differences. Johnson says CPAA data has been instrumental in acting as an objective confirmation of classroom observations and one-on-one assessments.

Impact

Guiding Instruction without Additional Disruptions

"I think our teachers enjoy getting the data. It's not labor intensive," Johnson says. While some assessments can create more work and cut into regular classroom time, Duchesne's teachers have found that the CPAA is not a disruption in the classroom, but a quick assessment that provides information they can use right away without losing additional time on data upload or analysis.

Proactively Identifying Resource Needs

Johnson reviews CPAA data to check for any gaps in Duchesne's early childhood curriculum. She has already used it to identify the need for specific resources and has purchased those materials to help teachers in presenting and practicing certain concepts such as fact families and learning math facts. Johnson mentions, "We also use the assessment to plan professional development. For example, our assessments indicated the need for additional work with students applying spelling rules when writing, so we held a training to help teachers address this area of need."

21st Century Assessment for Digital Natives

Teachers were initially concerned about adding one more thing to the schedule and one more test for the youngest girls, but after using the CPAA, they have become convinced of its advantages. "The exposure to interactive testing has been really great for the girls. They engage well with the computer-based assessment and seem to really like it. We feel this format is good preparation for taking the CTP and other assessments online in the future," says Johnson. The youngest girls enjoy the game-like presentation of questions and do not feel that they are taking a test. Johnson believes this is a positive and age-appropriate way to introduce the children to computer-based testing, which they will experience in older grades.

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